



UNION COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

BEHIND THE STAR

SHERIFF MALCUM J. "JAMIE" PATTON



### Commercial Vehicle Weight Enforcement

Trucks that carry too much cargo pose dangers to the motoring public. Excessive weight and extra load can cause tires to blow out, contents to fall on the road and rollover accidents. The average semi-tractor and trailer weight is around 80,000 pounds. This is roughly equivalent to 25,000 cars all driving simultaneously over the same pavement. Weight limits are in place to help reduce crashes, maintain our roadway infrastructure, and improve our public safety.

Ohio's Weight Laws were enacted in 1952 and enforcement began in 1953. Since fines were updated in 1964, there have been no other changes to the Ohio Weight Laws. However, in the early 2000s, Ohio's Weight Laws updated their policy regarding where commercial vehicles traveled into a two-tiered system, Non-Interstate and Interstate. Non-Interstate is when the vehicle only travels within Ohio and needs to abide by state regulations. Interstate means the vehicle will travel between states allowing truckers to haul heavier loads.

Any officer with reason to believe that the weight of a vehicle and its load is overweight may require the driver to stop and submit to a weighing. Some indicators of an unlawful load may include tires that are mashed or squatting, the vehicle's frame rubbing on its tires while moving, and cargo that is oblong in shape. Vehicles that seem to be struggling moving forward or that may have heavy black smoke coming from the exhaust can indicate a heavy vehicle. Another sign can be a visible load peaking over the sides of the bed or trailer. The more indicators present on a vehicle, the more reason to believe the vehicle may need to be weighed for being overweight.

Now let's talk about farm machinery. As the planting season quickly approaches, farmers will need to use the roadways to go between the farm and the field to plant crops. The Sheriff's Office receives complaints and questions every year during planting season inquiring about the laws governing farm equipment. Over the past several decades, the size of farm equipment being manufactured has grown by leaps and bounds while the width of roadways generally has not. At certain times of the day getting around slow-moving farm equipment can be very challenging. Please remember to be courteous and share the roadway so that everyone arrives at their destination safely.

Here are three of the most frequently asked questions regarding farm equipment:

Q. What is considered farm machinery?

According to Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section 4501.01, farm machinery is defined as all machines and tools used in producing, harvesting, and caring for farm products. It includes trailers that are used to transport agricultural products or agricultural production materials between a local place of storage or supply and the farm, agricultural tractors, threshing

machinery, hay-baling machinery, corn shellers, hammer mills, and machinery used in the production of horticultural, agricultural, and vegetable products.

Q. Why don't farmers pull over and let traffic around them?

Farmers are not required to pull over. However, most farmers realize they share the roadways and that people have places to go and things to do. Many will pull over when they can safely do so to allow traffic around them. Sometimes, however, they should get to their location as quickly as possible, so they are out of everyone's way. Pulling over and letting traffic go around them can create other issues and sometimes be more hazardous than not doing so.

Q. Can I legally pass a piece of farm machinery on a solid yellow line?

Yes. ORC section 4511.31(B) states that if the slow-moving vehicle is proceeding at less than half the posted speed limit, you may overtake the vehicle provided you do not exceed the speed limit in doing so. You must also have a clear sight distance to the left of the center or center line of the roadway to overtake the vehicle safely and not interfere with oncoming traffic. All other laws that pertain to overtaking and passing a vehicle traveling in the same direction still apply.

"Our goal is to keep Union County a safe place to live, work, and visit. Please take your time and share the road," says Sheriff Patton. If you have questions about commercial vehicles or farm machinery, please call the Union County Sheriff's Office at 937-645-4110.